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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001103

SIPDIS  
DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S CARSON, AF/RSA, AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/09/12  
TAGS: [MASS](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [DJ](#) [SO](#) [FR](#)  
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI PRESIDENT APPEALS AGAIN FOR USG TO EQUIP SOMALI  
TRAINEES

REF: 09 DJIBOUTI 435; 09 DJIBOUTI 1101

CLASSIFIED BY: James Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (D)

1.(C) Summary: Djiboutian President Ismail Omar Guelleh forcefully repeated his appeal for USG assistance to equip Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces currently being trained in Djibouti (Ref A). Despite Djibouti's limited resources, he said he will draw the necessary funds from the Djiboutian Central Bank to provide the equipment immediately, but seeks a USG commitment to back-fill the funds/equipment. The training program in Djibouti will now be extended for an additional 20 days (until early October) and will integrate both the French- and Djiboutian-trained recruits under the leadership of the Somali officers from the French training. Guelleh confirmed that the TFG trainees would be kept together as a unit upon their return to Mogadishu and would be given a mission in coordination with AMISOM, likely in North Mogadishu. Septel reports President Guelleh's comments on Somaliland. End summary.

12. (C) President Guelleh convoked Ambassador the morning of September 12 to deliver a strong appeal for USG support for Djiboutian-trained TFG forces. Guelleh said he was "very disappointed" with the level of support provided by the U.S. to date. With Djibouti's limited means and other pressing security requirements (e.g., border defense against Eritrea), his government had dug deep within its own military resources to train the TFG troops. Now, the trainees are on the verge of returning to Mogadishu, yet Djibouti still has received no support in equipping them for the threats they will face from al-Shabaab. "We can't just send them back with empty hands," Guelleh said.

GODJ TO PAY FOR EQUIPMENT; WANTS BACK-FILL

13. (C) In view of the urgent requirement, Guelleh said had decided to direct the Djiboutian Central Bank to make available the funds necessary to equip the TFG forces. But he seeks a USG commitment to "cover his back" for this debt to the bank by confirming USG replenishment of the funds/equipment. Ambassador expressed USG appreciation for all Djibouti has done in support of the TFG, and said he well understood the heavy burden on Djibouti of conducting the training. Ambassador explained that the USG had one pending request from the GODJ (dated July 4) for kit and equipment for the initial cohort of trainees. There has been no USG decision taken to provide this support, though it remains under consideration. Ambassador said he would reiterate to the Department that President Guelleh had again personally appealed for this assistance. "Yes, it is urgent," said Guelleh.

DJIBOUTIANS TO EXTEND TRAINING, INTEGRATE WITH FRENCH TRAINEES

14. (C) Guelleh said that the GODJ had decided to extend the training provided to the TFG recruits in Djibouti, and would use the additional period to integrate the French- and Djiboutian-trained troops. In a separate meeting September 12, Djiboutian Chief of Defense Staff Major General Fathi Houssein told incoming SDO/DATT and outgoing Security Cooperation Officer that the training would be extended for an additional 20 days (i.e., until early October) and would be led by the Somali officers who participated in the French program. This joint training will commence at Djibouti's Hol Hol military training site beginning o/a September 14. Ambassador welcomed this news. (Note: Chief of Defense Staff also presented SDO/DATT and SCO with a letter requesting additional equipment, uniforms, and weapons for the full contingent of 1000 TFG forces to be trained by Djibouti. Some of the requested items duplicate those presented in the July 4 letter; others are new. The September 12 letter has been scanned and sent to AF/RSA and AF/RSA. End Note.)

15. (C) French Forces in Djibouti (FFDJ) Commander Brigadier General Thierry Caspar-Fille-Lambie confirmed to Ambassador later September

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12 that he had indeed received a request from the Djiboutian CHOD to send the Somali trainees to Hol Hol for supplementary training. Caspar said he was awaiting confirmation from Paris to do so, but expected it shortly as all agreed the additional integrated training would be useful. The French had also received for the first time a request from the Djiboutians for equipment and weapons for the Somali recruits -- apparently the same request as presented to the SDO/DATT and SCO September 12. Caspar confirmed that a second contingent of 350 Somali troops is scheduled to arrive in Djibouti in 15 days for the next basic training module offered by the French.

TFG FORCES TO STAY AS SINGLE UNIT IN MOGADISHU

16. (C) Guelleh said he had discussed the deployment of the Djiboutian trained forces with Somali President Sharif during his September 9-11 visit to Djibouti (Ref B). Upon their return to Mogadishu, the trainees will be kept together as a single unit and will be deployed in consultation with AMISOM. Guelleh said the returnees would likely be assigned to North Mogadishu, responsible for protecting TFG facilities and key officials' residences, as well as supporting a planned disarmament campaign. In an earlier meeting September 12, Presidency Secretary General Ismail Tani also told the Ambassador it was the strong GODJ conviction that the new trainees should be kept separate from other TFG forces, now that the trainees had received professional military instruction and been inculcated with the importance of functioning as a national entity, rather than a clan militia.

COMMENT

17. (C) President Guelleh's personal appeal for USG support for the TFG trainees underscores the priority he gives to this assistance, which is pending a decision in the Department. Embassy Djibouti strongly supports a positive response to this request. We are encouraged by news that the Djiboutian training program will be extended and linked to that of the French, and that the TFG

trainees will operate as a single unit upon their return to Mogadishu, consistent with USG recommendations to the GODJ and TFG.  
SWAN